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# THE NEW (GERMAN) TESTAMENT

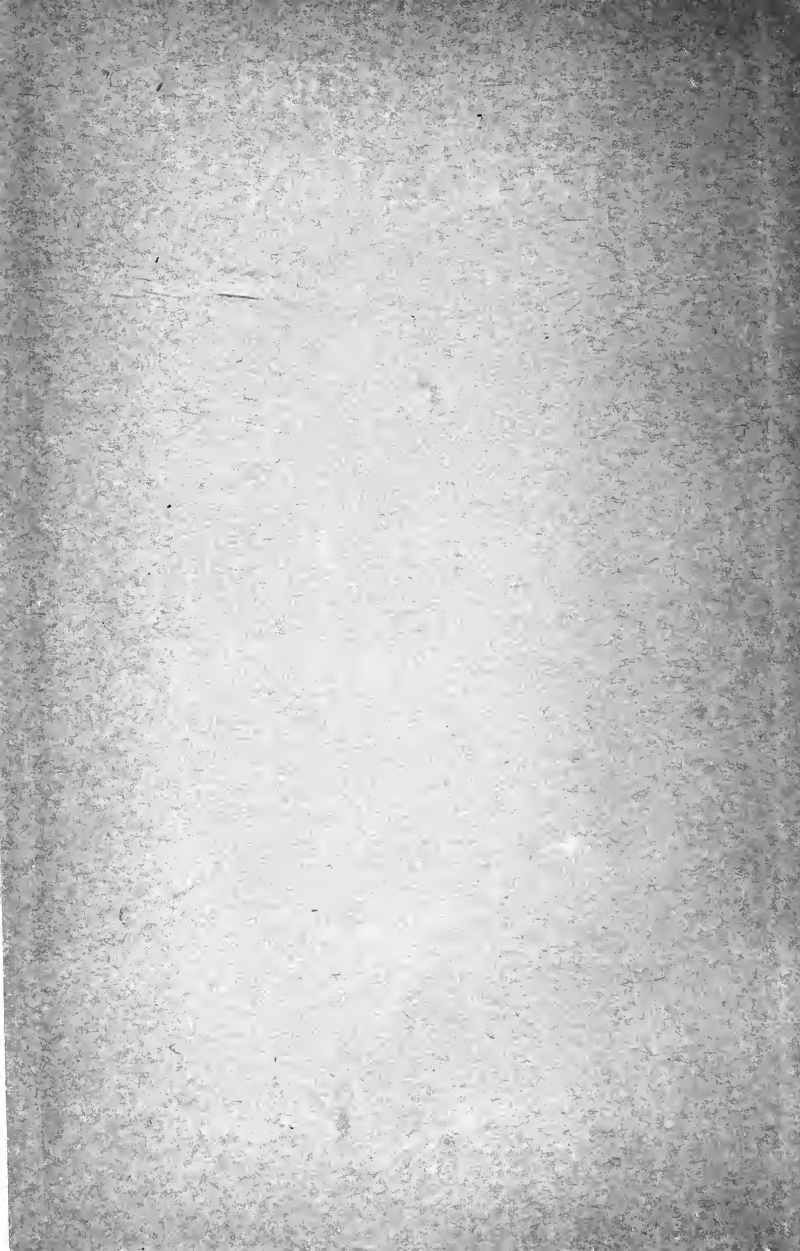
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BY  
**ANTHONY HOPE**

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**METHUEN & CO. LTD. LONDON**

**1914**





**THE NEW (GERMAN) TESTAMENT**



# THE NEW (GERMAN) TESTAMENT

SOME TEXTS AND A COMMENTARY

BY

ANTHONY HOPE

*Hawkins, Anthony Hope*

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# THE NEW (GERMAN) TESTAMENT

## I

### THE BLESSINGS OF—WAR

**W**E have all been on the wrong tack—we, the nations great and small—who have counted ourselves civilized and Christian; the great and populous nations who have worked for peace and often imposed it by diplomacy; the numerically weak nations who have accepted peace as a permanent and honourable condition of their independent life.

Lamentably wrong have our statesmen been, with their efforts after peace, their Hague Conferences, Arbitration Treaties, Arbitration Commissions, prohibition of armaments on the Great

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Lakes of North America, and so forth. Lamentably wrong our Churches, with their ministers preaching peace and praying for it, with their congregations in their millions breathing the same prayer to the Throne of God. And how pitiable to think that we have deluded even our little children into lisping prayers for peace and into conceiving of the august and gracious figure of the Founder of their religion as the Prince of Peace !

We have indeed recognized that peace is not to be purchased at any and every price, that we must fight in the cause of national independence, or vital interest, or dear honour, going indeed so far as sometimes to fight merely because we promised to—a quixotic proceeding in the sincerity of which it is wellnigh impossible to believe ! But we have been at a wrong angle of vision all the same. We thought we were accepting a mighty evil to escape from a mightier. We have tried to escape these mightier evils by other means.



We have dared to dream of the time when the sense of right, justice, and human comradeship would be our shield and buckler, and when the last remedy of war would be no more needed. In this dream we may have accused ourselves, in despondent hours, of being visionary and Utopian. We were, in fact, something much worse than that, as will speedily appear.

Germany knows better about all this ; at least, Prussia does ; or, at all events, the Prussian generals do—witness General von Bernhardt, whose book “Germany and the Next War” is now enjoying a prominence which must be counted well-deserved. The book, written some three years ago, is primarily an exhortation to the German nation ; but other nations may naturally take an interest in it at the present time. Unless his translator (on whom my ignorance of German compels me to rely) wrongs him, the General, though not a vivacious writer, is admirably lucid, and can say what he means as

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well as anybody. The Germans, he says in his Introduction, "have to-day become a peace-loving—an almost too peace-loving—nation." (I do not know how far this reproach is just; but, if it is, one may be allowed to be sorry for them just now.) "We are accustomed," he remarks regretfully, "to regard war as a curse, and refuse to recognize it as the greatest factor in the furtherance of culture and power."

Again: "I must first of all examine the aspirations for peace, which seem to dominate our age, and threaten to poison the soul of the German people, according to their true moral significance." Poison! A strong word! We begin to see how wrong we have been in our notions—instilling this "poison" of a love of peace into the veins even of our children!

"I must try to prove that war is not merely a necessary element in the life of nations, but an indispensable factor of culture, in which a truly civilized nation finds the highest expression of

strength and vitality.” That we took altogether too low a view of war is obvious. We have done nothing like justice to it. It is not a desperate remedy: it is an uncommonly good thing in itself.

In fact it is so good a thing that people who profess to hate it are mostly just humbugging. “Pacific ideals, to be sure, are seldom the real motive of their action. They usually employ the need of peace as a cloak under which to promote their own political aims. This was the real position of affairs at the Hague Conference, and this is also the meaning of the action of the United States of America, who in recent times earnestly tried to conclude treaties for the establishment of Arbitration Courts, first and foremost with England, but also with Japan, France, and Germany.” America is pretty well shown up—with her talk about peace and brotherhood, and blood being thicker than water!

“War is a biological necessity of the first importance, a regulative element in

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the life of mankind which cannot be dispensed with, since without it an unhealthy development will follow, which excludes every advancement of the race, and therefore all real civilization." And we dreamed of abolishing it—at all events, of restricting it to the narrowest limits and the most inevitable occasions ! Whereas it appears that, if we have not got a *casus belli*, we ought to find one as soon as possible. So long as the General has his way, we may easily be presented with one without looking for it.

But war is more than a biological necessity. " Might is at once the supreme right, and the dispute as to what is right is decided by the arbitrament of war. War gives a biologically just decision, since its decisions rest on the very nature of things." So that nationality, liberty, aggression, treaties (" scraps of paper "), etc., go for nothing, and we are just as wrong in considering them as in working or praying for peace.

War has done very well already in the General's hands ; its virtues are not exhausted yet. " It is not only a biological law but a moral obligation and, as such, an indispensable factor in civilization."

Now even we, in spite of our mistakes, should not deny that war *may be* on occasion a moral obligation, either towards ourselves or towards others. But there is a vast difference between " is " and " may be." The latter suggests the contingent and occasional, the former the normal and regular. The General's point of view is clear by his addition—" an indispensable factor in civilization." Indispensable factors are not things endured reluctantly and occasionally ; they are permanent and necessary—and presumably not very rare—features. Such is the position war holds in the General's conception of civilization. He makes this entirely clear as he proceeds to a rapturous eulogy of the virtues of war, fortified by quotations from Treitschke,

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Schiller, and Frederick the Great. He makes it notably clear by his illuminating observation that these virtues get no fair scope in "the pitiable existence of all small States."

"The pitiable existence of all small States!" We may suppose that Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland (to name no more) will see themselves as they really are in the light of these words. Perhaps we—and they—may also suppose with some plausibility that the General, if he has his way, will be charitable enough to relieve them from their pitiable existence as small States; he will put them out of their misery—as small States.

What will he do with them if he has his way? He does not, so far as I can find, say explicitly—he is more occupied in disposing of greater Powers—but farther on in the book he remarks with much emphasis: "In the future the importance of Germany will depend on two points: firstly, how many millions of men in the world speak

German ; secondly, how many of them are politically members of the German Empire." In the light of this, and in view of the General's undoubted patriotism, it is not perhaps hard to conclude how the pitiable existence of the small States is to be brought to a merciful conclusion.

And to what end does the biological necessity work, the biologically just decisions tend? What is to be the reward of observing the moral obligation and of cherishing and promoting the indispensable factor in civilization? For the General as a German the answer is plain. "Thus alone," he says, "shall we discharge our great duties of the future, grow into a World Power, and stamp a great part of humanity with the impress of the German spirit." That is the answer for Germany—a vast and indefinite expansion of the German spirit, of the German culture of later days which has produced and which inspires the General's political philosophy. For Germany so far, so good.

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We understand the answer. It is frank and plain—and it does not take us by surprise.

What is the answer for other nations?

For the small nations we have seen it already. They are to be stamped with the impress of the German spirit; their “pitiable existences” are to be ended. We may borrow a phrase current in another connection. A steam-roller is to be passed over them—the steam-roller not of Russian troops but of Prussian notions; the steam-roller not of a campaign but of a conception and a culture—the culture that fosters the General’s philosophy and the Prussian military system. An end to their national existence, to their national ideals, to the rich diversity of civilization to which the world has owed so much and from which it had such hopes in the future! No independent voice is to be raised from the land that was the home of Ibsen, no independent dreams of beauty from the country that gave us Maeterlinck! Where the steam-



roller has passed nothing is to be heard but the accents of the culture which has produced the General's philosophy and inspired the Prussian military system.

What is the answer for the great nations?

For France? But we may leave France out. The General himself gives the answer. "France must be so completely crushed that she can never again come across our path." France is to be steam-rollered! And at least a pretty broad edge of the machine may be expected to pass over her Allies also.

But what is the answer for the great nations not engaged in the war? Or are all to be engaged? Is the whole world to be stamped—and stamped out? Even the General can hardly expect that. Well, then, what is the prospect for these great nations and for the lands they people and administer? The General's philosophy, though invented and patented in Germany, can hardly be limited to that country. If it be successful, other nations will help them-

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selves to licences for its employment. They too will recognize the biological law ; they too will seek, by that Might which is the supreme Right, biologically just decisions ; they will not neglect the moral obligation, nor suffer the indispensable factor in civilization to lie idle. They too, converted by the General's philosophy, will seek war and ensue it. Because to the General's converts war is not a calamity which must be faced sometimes—which must happen sometimes—owing to human fault or frailty : it is a thing which *ought to happen* normally, in the interests of a nation's spirit and culture.

Behold, then, the prospect that lies before the world if the General's philosophy triumphs in the schools, and the military system which it inspires repeats the triumph in the field ! For the small nations extinction—political, intellectual, spiritual. For the great nations an endless strife, generation after generation of mankind locked in deadly and bloody struggles. And no end to it, no hope,

no dream, of an end to it ! For war will be not merely a thing which must happen : it will be a thing which *ought to happen*. It will not only be a necessity : it will also be an ideal, and he who prays, “ Give peace in our time, O Lord ! ” will be sinning against his country and his own soul.

Whereupon that discredited creature, the Angel of Peace, will spread her wings, soar to the heavens to report the failure of her mission, and leave the earth to enjoy for ever the blessings of war.

## II

### GREAT BRITAIN'S BLUNDER

**A** MAN generally knows whether he is a knave or not, but generally does not know whether or not he is a fool. Hence he would sooner be called knave than fool. If he is a knave, he cannot much resent the accusation ; if his conscience is clear, he dismisses it with a smile. But to taunt him with being a fool makes him uneasy and sets him on self-examination.

It is the same with nations, and hence it comforts a nation to find its enemies imputing to it not folly or blindness but a long-headed cunning, even though the cunning ascribed to it be untrammelled by scruples to a degree which it would not itself be willing for a

moment to admit. England had sooner be called perfidious than a blockhead.

Her enemies, as a rule, fall in with her preference, imputing to her a consistent, unscrupulous, and supremely able policy of self-interest which seems to Englishmen themselves as much above their intellectual capacity as it is below their most modest conception of their own morals.

But England is not quite the perfect villain. She has had her lapses; she has missed her chance now and then. She has not always hit her man on the head when he was least able to hit back; she has not always stabbed him in the back when he was fighting somebody else in front—not always, however much, of course, she may, in certain eyes, under various fine pretexts about treaties and neutral rights, be doing it now.

One sore lapse of this kind that notable exponent of German policy and principles, General von Bernhardt, is good enough to point out to his countrymen and to us in his book "Germany

and the Next War.” He is much struck with it ; he refers to it more than once. Here are a couple of passages—I quote from the English translation of the book :—

“ Since England committed the unpardonable blunder, from her point of view, of not supporting the Southern States in the American War of Secession, a rival to England’s world-wide Empire has appeared on the other side of the Atlantic in the form of the United States of North America, which are a grave menace to England’s fortunes.”

Again : “ This policy [ i.e. the German policy of not effecting “ a final settling of accounts with France ” at a favourable moment ] somewhat resembles the supineness for which England has herself to blame, when she refused her assistance to the Southern States in the American War of Secession, and thus allowed a Power to arise, in the form of the United States of North America, which already, although barely fifty

years have elapsed, threatens England's own position as a World Power."

I am not old enough—just not old enough—to remember the War of Secession, but I have talked with many who remember those days well, and we have all read many books about that troubled and momentous time. Everybody knows that there was a great deal of sympathy for the South in England, especially among the upper classes, even more powerful politically then than now. Everybody knows that war nearly came about by reason of it, but was avoided—happily and mercifully avoided, as we Englishmen have been in the habit of saying, till General von Bernhardt came along to teach us to say "unhappily and stupidly evaded"! Everybody knows that in the end the preponderance of opinion in England imposed not intervention on the Northern side but a neutrality which left the sad but splendid conflict to be fought out without foreign interference—to be fought out by men on both sides who believed that they

fought in a righteous cause, for which they were ready and bounden, not only to lay down their own lives but to take the lives of their fellow-countrymen—aye, of their own brethren, if need be. History lays her wreath of laurel on the graves of the heroes of the North and of the South alike. And the Great Republic lives.

That was what Great Britain did. What does General von Bernhardt, with his Prussian politico-military philosophy and principles, say that she ought to have done—only her supineness and unpardonable blundering prevented her from doing it? For her there should have been no nonsense about which side was right, no nonsense about generous and disinterested sympathy with the South's strong Constitutional case and splendid pluck on the one side, or with the sentiment of national unity, the cause of the slaves, or the dogged and persevering valour which drew hearts to the other side. All these were simply irrelevant. Great Britain—if she would



not be supine and stupid—had simply to ask, “What will pay me best?” And simply to answer, “Helping the South.” Why? “*Because by helping the South I shall in the long run cripple both South and North. By helping one I shall hurt both.*”

How were we to achieve that master-stroke of policy against a friendly and kindred people? Very simply. We were to provide the Federal States (the United States would no longer have existed!) with a neighbour—an armed and angry neighbour. The Confederate States a nation, perpetually a rival, always potentially a foe! Hatred and rivalry between themselves were to keep Americans busy, their hands filled with that, while the astute Britisher filled his pockets with the trade that his cousins had not time to attend to!

Why were we so stupid? Why did we make the unpardonable blunder of not adopting a policy so astute, so profitable, so thoroughly worthy of a great nation, claiming to be in the van

of civilization and culture? Because this policy appears to be that which recommends itself, in the light of history, to what is the greatest and finest civilization of all—the present German variety.

Well, we must concede this much to General von Bernhardi and his theory of our unpardonable blunder: we did not adopt the policy because, among other reasons, it never entered our heads. There may have been a few Machiavellis (or Bernhardis) about, but our people as a whole were guided by their sympathies, by their prejudices if you will; the question of self-interest was not present to their minds.

But if it had been? I think I know what the attitude of the British people would have been towards such a policy; but I have no desire to indulge in strong language about the moral and political principles which inspire the German (or perhaps I should say Prussian) statecraft of which the General is so distinguished and resolute a champion. The important thing is that the free

peoples of the world—the peoples themselves, and not merely their politicians and their professors—should understand what the canons of this statecraft are. When once the free peoples understand we are content to abide by their verdict.

For though I have chosen—and of course purposely chosen—an example of this statecraft which has a special interest for Americans as well as for ourselves, the question itself is a much wider one, and has an actual, not merely an historical, interest for all the nations, as well as for the combatants in the present great struggle. For this struggle, immense and terrible as it is, is but a step, an incident, in the world-policy which General von Bernhardt expounds. If it ends as he would have it end, on his own principles his cry must still be “Onward!”

The world is being asked to-day to choose between two conceptions of national policy and duty. There has been no more momentous question put

to it since history began. And it must be answered. *Quo Vadis?* The question is put to the civilized world.

Let us try to sketch, briefly and roughly, what has been among civilized peoples the ideal of national policy in international affairs in recent times. It is with ideals that we are dealing. No doubt all nations have occasionally sinned against the light, more or less purposely, more or less consciously, always (I think) in face of a strong protest from a strong minority of their own citizens, and generally with a swift return to a worthier mind. What has been this ideal?

The State is a trustee for its citizens. It is bound to assert, maintain, and promote their rights and their interests. Its first duty is to them; it must not, without their express sanction, practise charity or benevolence to other nations at their expense. It is to guard also their honour and see that their voice in the counsels of the world receives the respect which is its due. But it is to

exercise these functions with a due regard to the rights and legitimate interests of other nations. It is to observe not only international law but international morals—and even international manners. It is to respect the national life and the freedom of its neighbours. Though vigilant in its own cause, it is yet to be a good member of the community of nations.

Something like this, perhaps, is what an average citizen of a free and civilized country expects of his Government in dealing with other civilized countries. The case of barbarous countries, with their peculiar (and very difficult) moral problems, need not here detain us. As between civilized nations something like this is, if not a realized standard, at least a possible and perhaps not distant ideal, something at which we have been aiming and towards which we conceived ourselves to be progressing—in spite of occasional backslidings, of which we have been very acutely conscious in the case of our neighbours, and perhaps

sometimes a little suspicious even as regards our own proceedings.

But how stands Germany towards this ideal—modern Germany, the German Empire under Prussian hegemony and Prussian inspiration? She gives it the go-by altogether. She gives the go-by to the rights of her neighbours. Persuaded apparently by her philosophers and historians that she possesses a particular brand of "culture" which is far superior to any other in the world, she sees her duty towards the community of nations as consisting solely in compelling as many of them as she can to become, willy-nilly, partakers of this culture—in "stamping [as General von Bernhardi says] a great part of humanity with the impress of the German spirit." In the pursuit of this end war is, we are told, not only a necessity but a duty, a moral obligation and a condition of national well-being. "The inevitableness, the idealism, and the blessing of war, as an indispensable and stimulating law of development, must be repeatedly

emphasized." Might is the supreme Right, victory the supreme and sufficient justification. German culture must spread. It can spread only through German power. And German power depends "on two points: firstly, how many millions of men in the world speak German; secondly, how many of them are politically members of the German Empire." And there are not nearly enough at present—in General von Bernhardi's opinion.

Nothing limits the right to bring about this German ideal. It is above all other rights; it is a Super-Right. No plea of nationality, of freedom, of long prescription, of the desire of the governed, of international law, or of express treaty can bind or overrule it. On the contrary, it overrules them all. *Salus populi, suprema lex*. No doubt. But the salvation of the German people seems quite incompatible with the permanent or secure salvation of anybody else!

Well, you may call this new German

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ideal what you please. You may call it grandiose and dazzling. You may call it immoral and unscrupulous. If you are at all acquainted with "cultures," ancient and modern, which are not conceived on the lines of this new German "culture," you may call it impudent and absurd. But there is one thing you must call this ideal, and that is—dangerous.

Such part of the globe as it cannot make a German province it inevitably makes an armed camp.

If proof of this be needed—though, indeed, the proof of it starts to the eyes of any nation that does not wish to become a German province if it can help it—let us go back to England's "unpardonable blunder," and try to see what would have happened if she had not committed it—if, on the contrary, she had supported the Southern States against the North. Of course we must assume—though it is a considerable assumption—that her intervention would have been successful, that with her help the Southern States would have suc-



ceeded in establishing and maintaining their independence. As a result, where there are now the United States of America, there would be two independent nations—and of course, on German principles, armed nations, each trying to be stronger than the other, to get the better of the other, perhaps to impose (*more Germanico*) their “culture” on the other. Herein, says General von Bernhardt, would lie the triumph of British policy. The Northern nation and the Southern nation, as busy with one another as were the proverbial Kilkenny cats, would have no surplus time or energy to spend in interfering with the designs or the prosperity of Great Britain. The North might hate, but she would be impotent. The South might forget her gratitude (the General cannot afford, on his principles, to rely on national gratitude), but she would have her hands full all the same.

But still—is the General quite so right as he thinks? Could England be sure of being able to stand by smiling—and

raking in the dollars? If gratitude can be forgotten, so can an old quarrel—when it pays to forget it. Would the British Government be safe in ignoring the chance that some day the North would say to the South: “Our profit doesn’t lie in keeping up this old quarrel or in worrying one another. Let us do a deal. You shall be free to ‘expand’ as much as you like southwards—in Mexico, in Central America, where you will down there. In return let us be free to expand northwards. We shall both find that a much better game than cutting one another’s throats for England’s profit”?

If England did sufficient justice to America’s common sense to conceive of such an arrangement as even possible, what must be her imperative safeguard against the possibility? There is only one answer: an armed Canada—Canada armed to the teeth along her immense frontier, armed on the Great Lakes, and, pending at least a fuller growth of her strength, demanding and engrossing no

small part of the resources of the Mother Country for her defence.

Whether this development would be better for England than the present state of affairs I will not discuss. I think I hardly need. Anyhow, it is enough for my purpose to point out by this example whither Bernhardian principles and policy tend.

There are two friendly peoples now on the continent of North America. If England had not committed her "unpardonable blunder," there would have been three armed camps.

So the new German ideal works out in this example. And it would work out in the same way in others. The nation that will not be a German province must be an armed camp.

When the free nations realize this, they will make their choice between the two ideals of national policy in international affairs which are to-day presented for their consideration.

### III

## PAPER BULWARKS

**S**URELY no statesman holding high and responsible place ever let the cat out of the bag so completely as the German Imperial Chancellor in his now world-famous phrase about the "scrap of paper" !

Of course the appearance of the animal caused no surprise in Germany—no surprise, at least, to the enthusiastic disciples of Treitschke and Bernhardi, who number, as Professor Cramb tells us, their tens of thousands in Germany. They knew the colour of the animal quite well beforehand ; they knew what its claws were like—to say nothing of its whiskers, which must surely be pictured with a truly Imperial upward twist ! Cats of the same colour stalk through

the writings of their school of thought. "Neutrality is a paper bulwark," says Bernhardi. Treaties hold good *rebus sic stantibus*—which, if you drag it from what Gibbon calls "the decent obscurity of a learned language," means "while perfectly convenient." No, the colour of the Chancellor's cat was no surprise to them. They were quite familiar with the breed.

But they are surprised—genuinely surprised, I believe, though at first sight it seems difficult to believe—that anybody else should feel differently. They are so imbued with the virtue of their own doctrine—with its "religion of valour" and its "return to Odin," and so forth—that they are unable to understand how it can be questioned save by fools, hypocrites, or cowards. They do not think the British fools; they do think them hypocrites; they do think them cowards—or did. And thus in their eyes the position we profess as to Belgian neutrality is abundantly explained.

But there are signs that they are beginning to see that the colour and claws of the Chancellor's cat are rather alarming to other people—rather alarming, or at least rather startling, to the free peoples, large and small; rather questionable to men and women who have not returned to Odin, but still take their standards from another source of religious and ethical inspiration. So there is an attempt to put rather a different colour on the cat, perhaps to thrust it back into the bag—half-way back, anyhow, so that claws and whiskers may be hidden, even if the colour remains obstinately apparent. Accordingly, arguments of other than the plain Treitschke-Bernhardi order are adduced by German writers and their apologists.

One of them takes the familiar *tu quoque* form—the old “You’re another!” of our childish days. If Germany had not violated the neutrality of Belgium, France and Great Britain would have.

As to this, it may be observed first—and the remark applies to both Powers—that such counter-charges are easy to bring—so easy that they carry no weight, unless evidence in support of them is produced. Such evidence the German Government has declared itself to possess. It has been challenged to produce it. Until it does so, the presumption would seem to be that this retort is designed for consumption by those, in Germany itself and in neutral countries, whose stomachs find the undiluted doctrine of the “scrap of paper” rather strong meat, difficult of digestion and threatening, perhaps, after-effects of an unpleasant order.

But with regard to Great Britain, at least, we may say more than this. The charge, if advanced in good faith and sincerity, shows an astonishing ignorance of the state of opinion in this country. It is safe to say that no British Government (and, I may add in passing, least of all a Liberal Government, depending so largely as it does on pacific

opinion and on the support of the friends of the smaller nations) would or could have taken such a step. It would almost certainly have been suicidal to the Government itself. It would certainly have rent public opinion in twain and fatally impaired the support which the nation at large now accords enthusiastically to the policy of His Majesty's Government. It would, in the eyes of the greater part of the nation—I believe in the eyes of practically the whole nation—have stamped on our friendship with France a shameful and fatal stain. We could not have fought the war in good heart after it.

Let us pass to another argument employed by the apologists, and deserving of notice for its ingenuity at least. The "scrap of paper"—or, in other and more formal language, the Quintuple Treaty of London (April 19, 1839) between Great Britain, Austria, France, Russia, and Prussia on the one hand, and the Netherlands on the other—was not, it is said, in its true nature



and essence a Treaty *with* Belgium, but a Treaty *about* Belgium. The only rights or obligations created by it were mutual rights and obligations between the contracting parties. These came to an end, *ipso facto*, with the existence of a state of war between the contracting parties. And Belgium was left quite out in the cold!

This somewhat technical argument takes us a long way from the beautiful simplicity of the "scrap-of-paper" doctrine. But it is worth a moment's examination.

What does Article VII of the Quintuple Treaty say? "Belgium shall form a State independent and perpetually neutral. It is under obligation to observe neutrality towards all other States."

Now it cannot be denied that Belgium was in form a signatory to the Treaty with the five Powers. But more than this: in substance also she was plainly a party, and for the reason that the Treaty not only grants her a right—the

right of immunity from attack—but imposes on her an obligation—the obligation not to attack others. If she observes the obligation, she is entitled to rely on the right. A promise is given to her on a consideration. She has conformed to her obligation; she has carried out the condition. With what face is she now to be told that the right is illusory because other parties to the Treaty have quarrelled?

Moreover, against what contingency was the Treaty directed? In what case was its operation contemplated? Precisely in the case which arose in 1870 and which has now arisen again in 1914—the case of war between two or more of the contracting parties. It is a pretty argument which tells us that a Treaty is abrogated by the existence of the precise state of affairs which it was intended to meet, and under which alone it could have any virtue or effect! Whatever apologists in a tight place may be forced to do, statesmen do not stultify themselves in that fashion.

Finally, if Germany either would or could have relied on any such self-destructive plea as this, she has a witness against her, whom she herself cannot refuse to hear, whom the rest of the world was accustomed to hear with a deference not unmingled with apprehension. That witness is the greatest of Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg's predecessors.

When in 1870 trouble came about between France and Prussia, Great Britain took a very definite line about the neutrality of Belgium. She plainly intimated that, in the case of one belligerent respecting, while the other violated, that neutrality, the United Kingdom would take part with the belligerent respecting the neutrality against the other. And treaties in this sense were made with France and with Prussia—in which latter, by the way, the King of Prussia expressed himself as being desirous of “recording by a solemn act his fixed determination to maintain the independence and

neutrality of Belgium as provided in Article VII of the Treaty signed in London on the 19th April, 1839"—our old friend the "scrap of paper."

But what is important for our point is that Prince Bismarck, acting for his Sovereign, not only gave assurances to and made a treaty with Great Britain. *He gave assurances to Belgium also.* And the terms of the assurance are worth setting out here :—

BERLIN,  
le 22 Juillet, 1870.

M. LE MINISTRE,—

Confirmant mes assurances verbales, j'ai l'honneur de vous donner par écrit la déclaration, surabondante en présence des Traités en vigueur, que la Confédération du Nord et ses alliés respecteront la neutralité de la Belgique, bien entendu qu'elle sera respectée par l'autre partie belligérante.

Agreez, etc.,

VON BISMARCK

BARON NOTHOMB

Which being translated runs : “ Confirming my verbal assurance, I have the honour to give a declaration in writing—superfluous having regard to the Treaties in existence—that the Confederation of the North and its allies will respect the neutrality of Belgium, it being well understood that that neutrality will be respected by the other belligerent Power.”

And who was this Baron Nothomb, to whom this assurance is given? Not the representative of any of the Powers signing the Treaty, but *the Belgian Minister in Berlin*.

So that our witness, Prince Bismarck himself, plainly recognized two things :—

1. The validity of the Treaty of 1839.

2. The fact that not only the signatory Powers *but also Belgium* had a right to ask and receive assurances that the Treaty would be respected, that her right would be protected if her obligation were observed.

What was Prince Bismarck's view in

1870 is Great Britain's view in 1914. Perhaps that is enough to say about it.

But since we have been talking about 1870 it may be of interest to set out another document dating from the same time. It is not long, and recent events give it interest. We have seen what the German Imperial Chancellor thinks of the Treaty; we have seen what his great predecessor thought of it; let us see how the Belgians themselves looked at it in that same year 1870.

Here is the copy of an address from the Mayor and Communal Council of the City of Brussels to Queen Victoria, dated the 30th August, 1870. It relates to Great Britain's intimation—already referred to—that if one belligerent respected, while the other violated, Belgium's neutrality, she would take part with the former against the latter :—

MAYOR OF BRUSSELS TO QUEEN  
VICTORIA

30TH AUGUST, 1870

[ *Translation.* ]

YOUR MAJESTY,—

The great and noble people over whose destinies you preside has just given a further proof of its benevolent sentiments towards our country.

In the midst of the grave events which shake the foundations of ancient Europe the Government of Your Majesty, conscious of the obligations contracted by the Signatories to the Treaty of 1839, has taken the initiative in approaching the Powers which are parties to that Treaty, with a view to obtaining a new and efficacious confirmation of the neutrality of Belgium.

The voice of the English nation has been heard above the din of

arms : it has asserted the principles of justice and right.

Next to the unalterable attachment of the Belgian people to their independence, the liveliest sentiment which fills their hearts is that of an imperishable gratitude.

We think that Your Majesty and the people of Great Britain will value the evidence of their gratitude now offered in the name of a nation, free and prosperous, which has cultivated with wisdom and moderation for nearly half a century institutions similar to those of the United Kingdom.

The Municipal Council of the Capital express the unanimous sentiments of the population in assuring Your Majesty of its profound and respectful gratitude.

Such is the light in which the people of Belgium looked at the "scrap of paper." And if the terms in which the Mayor of Brussels refers to the people



of Great Britain are so handsome that an Englishman blushes to drag them from the archives of the past and repeat them here—well, it can only be said that it is easy to suppose circumstances under which he would have had to blush over them much more severely, and under which the Mayor of Brussels could not have used to King George the words which his predecessor addressed to Queen Victoria. He must have used words extremely different—and better, perhaps, left to the imagination.

After all, it is pleasant to think that the King and people of Great Britain could still look that old Mayor of Brussels in the face. As in 1870, so now they are giving a new and, please God, an efficacious confirmation of the neutrality of Belgium—so that some day, before long perhaps, the present Mayor of Brussels may endorse some of the things his predecessor said. And praise from the gallant M. Max would be praise indeed!

#### IV

### EMPIRE—AND LIBERTY?

**T**HERE are many things which General von Bernhardi, whose book is by now familiar to most of us by repute at least, is willing to promise the German people if only they will fall down and worship the ideal of national life and policy which he sets before them. It is true that the things belong for the moment to other people ; but that can soon be put right. The fruit—French plums or British peaches—is ripe ; it needs only a strong and resolute hand to pluck it.

But amongst all his promises there is one omission. I do not know whether or how far it may seem a remarkable omission in German eyes ; to an

Englishman it certainly appears so, and, as I should suppose, would so appear to a Frenchman or an American. Amongst all the rewards of victory which he dangles before the eyes of the conquering Germans, the irresistible race which is to have so much to say about other people's affairs, we look in vain for any promise that they are to have what an American, a Frenchman, or an Englishman would consider an adequate control of their own !

On the contrary, General von Bernhardi discourages any such idea—and that in round terms. "No people," he remarks bluntly, "is so little qualified as the German to direct its own destinies, whether in a parliamentary or in a republican Constitution ; to no people is the customary liberal pattern so inappropriate as to us. A glance at the Reichstag will show how completely this conviction, which is forced on us by a study of German history, holds good to-day."

No people so little qualified to direct

its own destinies ! An extreme saying ! Not even those naughty Servians ? Not the Turks ? Not the Albanians, who so failed to appreciate a German prince ? If what the General says be true, it would suggest to an Englishman—and not less to a citizen of other countries whose peoples do “direct their own destinies”—that the German “culture” has broken down somewhere. Because to such a citizen—even as to an Athenian of old—a “culture” that leaves the citizens unfit for and incapable of self-government fails in the first and most vital function of a national culture.

No doubts on this score afflict the General. He goes on to point out, quite contentedly, that “the German people has always been incapable of great acts for the common interest except under the irresistible pressure of external conditions, as in the rising of 1813, or under the leadership of powerful personalities. . . .” “We must take care, then,” he proceeds, “that such men are

assured the possibility of acting with a confident and free hand to accomplish great ends through and for our people. Within these limits it is in harmony with the German character to allow personality to have a free course for the fullest development of all individual forces and capacities, of all spiritual, scientific, and artistic aims."

It sounds very fine. What does it come to? Powerful Personalities, acting with confident and free hands, are to do the governing—to direct the destinies—while the German people, of all the most unfitted for this task, are to develop their capacities in intellectual pursuits "within these limits"—that is to say, subject to not interfering with the confident and free hands of the Powerful Personalities. That is put forward as the ideal for the nation whose ideals are to direct and govern as much of the world as possible.

What is this but the watchword—or the catchword—of every "benevolent

despotism," of every "enlightened aristocracy," since history began? "Occupy yourselves with the arts and sciences—leave politics to me," has been the command of the despot (whether an individual or a caste) through all the ages. It is the command of General von Bernhardi and his caste to his countrymen to-day. Will they—do they—accept it?

A citizen of a free and self-governing country—in the full sense in which an American, a Frenchman, or an Englishman (to name no other nationalities, though, happily, there are many others who could be named) understands these words—finds it hard to believe that they do—at all events, that they will—accept it permanently, for good and all. "You cannot govern yourselves—you are the most hopeless of all nations at that. But we—the Powerful Prussian Personalities—will govern you with confident and free hands, and govern half the world for you into the bargain. Only keep

*your* hands off politics—and we will fill them with the rich fruits of world-power ! ”

It is a splendid bribe ; that cannot be denied—*panem et circenses* with a vengeance !—and offered, not this time to the demoralized mob of a decadent capital, as the Cæsars offered “ bread and games ” to the rabble of Rome, but to the whole of a civilized, cultured, intellectual people—to the people who, however incapable of directing their own destinies, are chosen by the German God to control the destinies of so many other people !

A big bribe, indeed ! Nobody can appreciate its magnitude better than the nations which (if all goes well) are to have the privilege of providing the wherewithal to enable the General and his friends to redeem their promises.

Can the General and his friends “ deliver the goods ” ? Will the German people, dazzled as they now seem to be by the glittering prize held before their

eyes, be permanently content with the barter of liberty at home for Empire abroad? I will not attempt to answer these questions. Time must give the answer—time and the stricken field. Let us assume the answers that the General would like. In the words of his famous alternative, let it be—for the sake of this argument—world-power for Germany, and not downfall; and we will stifle the mild suggestion that a *via media* was really open to Germany if she had been content to take it.

On this hypothesis, then, what is the look-out for the rest of the world, and especially for that "great part of humanity" which is to be "stamped with the impress of the German spirit"—that spirit which, among its other manifestations, manifests a willingness to accept Bernhardt's bribe on Bernhardt's terms?

Well, anyhow, the great part of humanity, when duly stamped, can hardly expect to be better off than



the Germans themselves. What is sauce for the conquering goose (I mean no disrespect by recalling the old proverb) will certainly be sauce for the conquered gander. If the home Empire is unfit to direct its own destinies, the outlying dominions will not be allowed to direct theirs. That seems plain without much argument—indeed to suggest anything else might well set the home Empire on a reconsideration of its bargain. What the outlying dominions—the bases of the world-power—must expect is clearly an export of Powerful Personalities to direct their destinies with confident and free hands. Other Powers send out Governors: the British Empire does. But the German Empire overseas is not to be like the British Empire overseas; for this latter we know from Bernhardt's master—the great Treitschke himself—is a sham, "wholly a sham, wholly rotten." These Powerful Personalities will not be the representatives of a Constitutional Monarch, presiding over but not ruling

free and self-governing communities. They will be of the same type as the rulers at home. The bargain which is good enough for the home Empire will be good enough for the German Dominions overseas.

They promise to be pleasant, restful neighbours, these German Dominions overseas, with their destinies directed by Powerful Personalities trained in Bernhardian ideas and Bernhardian views of the German "Mission." Their Right will be Might, their Religion will be Valour, their Treaties—but we know by now all about that. They are to be Little Berlins—the description has already been applied by a writer of authority to the German colonies existing before the war. They are to be reproductions of the Great Berlin, of the German Empire at home—the German Empire of Bernhardi's and Treitschke's ideal—where the nation is the Army, and the Army is the nation, and war is a moral obligation; where the creed is "Live dangerously" and the Beatitude

“Blessed are the warmakers, for they shall be called, if not the children of Jahve, the children of Odin, who is greater than Jahve.” And it may be supposed their Litany will run, “*To battle, and murder, and sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us*”—and, *a fortiori*, “our enemies!”

One closes General von Bernhardi's book with a strange mixture of feelings. Its attitude and its teaching—the whole spirit which informs and animates it—seem at once so formidable and so preposterous. It is like some nightmare in which everything is turned upside down, all values changed, all standards reversed—a sort of “Alice in Wonderland” political faith. If it were all only a bad dream! And surely that is what we may hope and pray that it is for the German peoples themselves, a bad dream from which they will one day awake—awake to repudiate Bernhardi's bribe and Bernhardi's bargain, to take their own destinies into their own hands, and to assume their proper and

honourable place in the community of nations.

Such an awakening must, of a surety, be forced on Germany some day—whether from without or from within. The hope and the faith in such an awakening are the silver lining to the dark cloud of strife which broods over the world to-day.

But whatever our feelings may and must be at the present time about the nation to which he belongs, I cannot part from the General himself wholly in anger. He is, all said and done, a gallant controversialist. His is the massed frontal attack; there are no subtle attempts to outflank your principles or get round your apprehensions. He goes full tilt at them—horse, foot, and artillery. There never was such a man for saying things which you might imagine that he would be content with thinking—never such a man for telling you exactly what you may expect if he has his way with you! In virtue of these characteristics he is very

valuable at this juncture of affairs. Every man and woman of independent mind should read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest him. The wider circulation his book obtains and the more students he has, the better will the world understand what this war is really about, and what turns on the issue of it.

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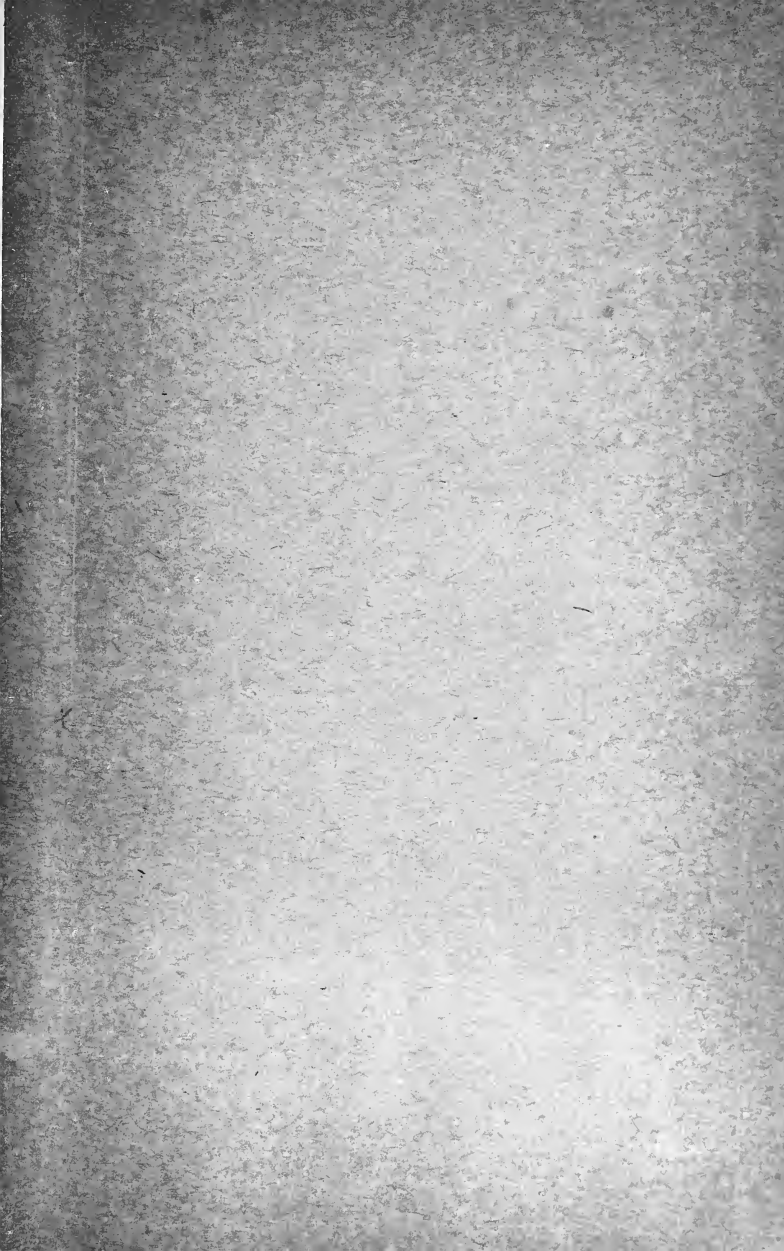
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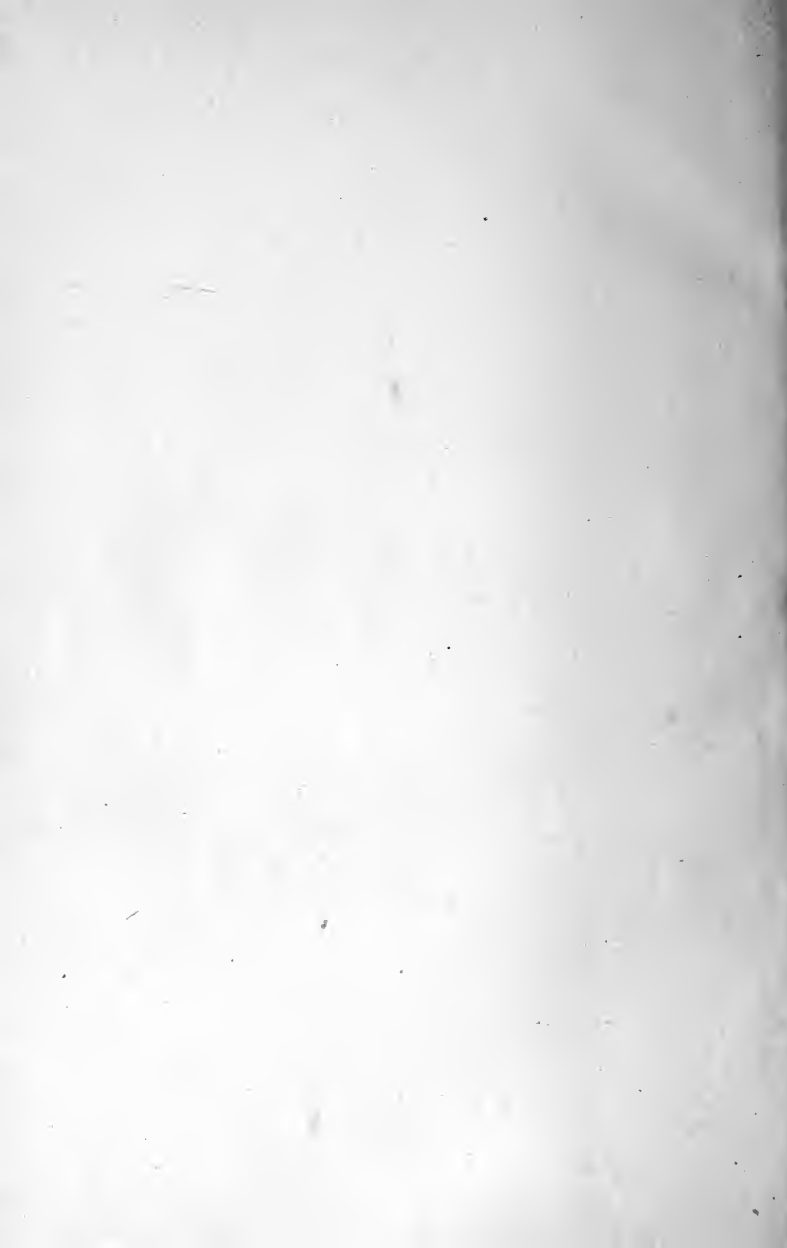
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